



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
MR. BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS**

on the occasion of

WORLD CITIES DAY

31 October 2014

The inaugural World Cities Day, and its theme “Leading Urban Transformations,” comes less than two weeks after the successful conclusion of the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 12) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea, which saw the adoption of an important decision with a focus on *sustainable urbanization*.

This decision and its adoption not only demonstrate the important role cities play in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, but recognize that biodiversity offers solutions to the challenges of sustainable urbanization.

Titled “Engagement with Subnational and Local Governments,” the decision invites the 194 Parties to the Convention to “increase their efforts to enable, support and guide strategic and sustainable urbanization by working together with subnational and local governments... especially in promoting local and subnational biodiversity strategies and action plans.” Furthermore, it calls on Parties “to incorporate biodiversity considerations into their urban, peri-urban and land use planning and infrastructure”... and to strengthen capacities of subnational and local governments to incorporate biodiversity into urban and other spatial planning processes.”

As cities move forward on implementing this agenda, they will show that they can lead the way in sustainably using biodiversity and the ecosystem services it underpins, as the basis for addressing water and food security, disaster risk reduction, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and other key issues. In so doing, subnational and local governments will also be contributing to the attainment of the CBD’s Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the overarching framework on biodiversity for the entire United Nations system.

The decision also calls upon the CBD Secretariat to mainstream biodiversity into the considerations of partner organizations; to integrate the contribution of subnational and local governments into the implementation of the Strategic Plan; and to collaborate with other United Nations agencies, international organizations, including biodiversity-related conventions, and stakeholders, on issues related to subnational and local implementation.



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The decision, appropriately aligned with the theme for COP 12, “Biodiversity for Sustainable Development,” reflects the CBD’s increased focus on the issues of urbanization and the subnational implementation of the Convention that is required to complement Parties’ efforts. This focus has already resulted in important publications such as “*Urbanization, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: Challenges and Opportunities*,” produced in partnership with the Stockholm Resilience Centre, UN-Habitat and others, as well as various pilot projects and events.

A key event at COP 12, and indeed the past four COPs, which has helped to demonstrate subnational government support for the implementation of the Convention, has been the “Biodiversity Summit for Cities and Subnational Governments.” Co-organized by long-time CBD partner, ICLEI–Local Governments for Sustainability, and this time in collaboration with the governments of Gangwon Province and the Republic of Korea, the event was well-attended with hundreds of participants, including governors and mayors, from 46 countries. They and representatives of national, international and United Nations organizations and experts in the field, discussed various aspects of subnational implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the UN sustainable development goals, with a focus on multi-level cooperation on biodiversity.

The Summit also produced the “Gangwon/Pyeongchang Resolution” - a declaration of the commitment by subnational and local governments present, to continue to contribute to the implementation of the CBD and a call for improved or continued cooperation by their national governments to enable that contribution.

Today, on World Cities Day, I am pleased to say that these recent actions taken by cities to conserve biodiversity and the natural systems that underpin the wealth of all nations are playing a pivotal role in our mutual efforts to conserve life on Earth.
